

3. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in claim 1 [or claim 2,] wherein [a mutant form] at least one of said two mutant forms of HBsAg has the sequence of HBsAg present in an HBV escape mutant.

4. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 3]claim 1, wherein [a mutant form]at least one of said two mutant forms of HBsAg has at least one amino acid substitution in the "a" determinant or in the region of the "a" determinant.

5. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 2 to 4]claim 2, wherein an amino acid substitution results from a point mutation.

6. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 5]claim 1, wherein [a mutant]at least one of said two mutant forms of HBsAg has an amino acid substitution within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

10. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in claim 1 [which is capable of binding specifically to wild type HBsAg and to]wherein at least one of [the following]said two mutant forms of HBsAg is selected from the group consisting of:

(a) Mutant HBsAg I ("NS" HBsAg): met to ile at amino acid 133; phe to his at amino acid 134; and asp to val at amino acid 144;

(b) Mutant HBsAg II ("MAM" HBsAg): met to ile at amino acid 133; phe to asn at amino acid 134; pro to ser at amino acid 142; ser to leu at amino acid 143; and gly to lys at amino acid 145;

(c) Mutant HBsAg III ("SZ" HBsAg): gly to arg at amino acid 145; and

(d) Mutant HBsAg IV ("SP" HBsAg): ser to met at amino acid 143.

12. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 11]claim 1 that is an IgG, IgM or IgA immunoglobulin.

16. (Amended) A monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 15]claim 1, in a [humanised]humanized form.

17. (Amended) A fragment or a derivative of a monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 16]claim 1.

20. (Amended) A hybridoma capable of producing a monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 11]claim 1.

26. (Amended) An immunoassay for the detection of HBsAg, which comprises contacting a sample under investigation with a monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 16 or claim 25, a]claim 1 or a fragment or derivative thereof [as claimed in claim 17], or a combination of two or more thereof, and detecting any resulting antigen-antibody complex.

28. (Amended) An immunoassay as claimed in claim 26[or claim 27], in a homogeneous or heterogeneous format.

29. (Amended) An immunoassay as claimed in claim [28]26, in a capture or a competitive format.

30. (Amended) An immunoassay as claimed in [any one of claims 26 to 29]claim 26, wherein an immunoassay for the detection of antibodies to hepatitis B core protein (HBc) is carried out simultaneously with the assay for HBsAg.

31. (Amended) An immunoassay kit that comprises a monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 16 or claim 25,]claim 1, or a fragment or derivative thereof[as claimed in claim 17], or a combination of two or more thereof, and other reagents required for carrying out an immunoassay for HBsAg and optionally also reagents for detecting anti-HBc antibodies.

38. (Amended) A composition suitable for use therapeutically or prophylactically for passive [immunisation]immunization against HBV which comprises a monoclonal antibody as claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 16 or claim 25,]claim 1, or a fragment or derivative thereof[as claimed in claim 17], or a combination of two or more thereof, in admixture with a pharmaceutically suitable carrier.

40. (Amended) A method of therapeutic or prophylactic passive [immunisation]immunization against HBV infection, which comprises administering to a subject a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of a monoclonal antibody as

a9 claimed in [any one of claims 1 to 16 or claim 25,] claim 1, or a fragment or derivative thereof[as claimed in claim 17], or a combination of two or more thereof.

a10 42. (Amended) An anti-idiotypic antibody to a monoclonal antibody as claimed [in any one of claims 1 to 16 or claim 25,] claim 1 or a fragment or derivative thereof[as claimed in claim 17].

Please ADD the following new claims:

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59. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 1, wherein at least one of said two mutant forms of HBsAg has the sequence of HBsAg present in an HBV escape mutant.

60. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 2, wherein said amino acid substitution is in the "a" determinant or in the region of the "a" determinant.

61. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 3, wherein said sequence of HBsAg present in an HBV escape mutant has at least one amino acid substitution in the "a" determinant or in the region of the "a" determinant.

62. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 59, wherein said sequence of HBsAg present in an HBV escape mutant has at least one amino acid substitution in the "a" determinant or in the region of the "a" determinant.

63. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 2, wherein said amino acid substitution is within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

64. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 3, wherein said sequence of HBsAg present in an HBV escape mutant has an amino acid substitution within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

65. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 4, wherein said amino acid substitution is within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

66. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 5, wherein a mutant HBsAg has an amino acid substitution within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

67. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 59, wherein said sequence of HBsAg present in an HBV escape mutant has an amino acid substitution within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

68. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 60, wherein said amino acid substitution is within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

69. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 61, wherein said amino acid substitution is within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

70. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 62, wherein said amino acid substitution is within the sequence encoding amino acids 133 to 145 of HBsAg.

71. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 2 that is an IgG, IgM or IgA immunoglobulin.

72. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 3 that is an IgG, IgM or IgA immunoglobulin.

73. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 4 that is an IgG, IgM or IgA immunoglobulin.

74. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 5 that is an IgG, IgM or IgA immunoglobulin.

75. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 6 that is an IgG, IgM or IgA immunoglobulin.

76. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 2, in a humanized form.

77. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 3, in a humanized form.

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78. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 4, in a humanized form.
79. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 5, in a humanized form.
80. (Newly Added) The monoclonal antibody of claim 6, in a humanized form.
81. (Newly Added) A fragment or a derivative of the monoclonal antibody of claim 2.
82. (Newly Added) A fragment or a derivative of the monoclonal antibody of claim 3.
83. (Newly Added) A fragment or a derivative of the monoclonal antibody of claim 4.
84. (Newly Added) A fragment or a derivative of the monoclonal antibody of claim 5.
85. (Newly Added) A fragment or a derivative of the monoclonal antibody of claim 6.
86. (Newly Added) A hybridoma which produces the monoclonal antibody of claim 2.
87. (Newly Added) A hybridoma which produces the monoclonal antibody of claim 3.
88. (Newly Added) A hybridoma which produces the monoclonal antibody of claim 4.
89. (Newly Added) A hybridoma which produces the monoclonal antibody of claim 5.
90. (Newly Added) A hybridoma which produces the monoclonal antibody of claim 6.
91. (Newly Added) An immunoassay for the detection of HBsAg, which comprises contacting a sample with the monoclonal antibody of claim 2 or a fragment or derivative thereof or a combination of two or more thereof, and detecting any resulting antigen-antibody complex.
92. (Newly Added) An immunoassay for the detection of HBsAg, which comprises contacting a sample with the monoclonal antibody of claim 3 or fragment or derivative